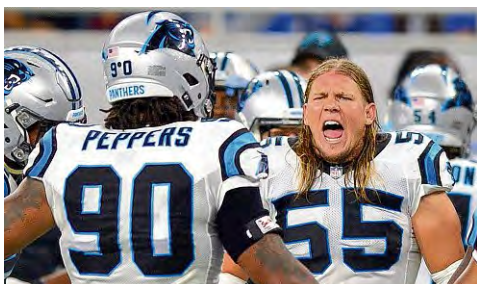


SPORTS

Playoff primer:
Panthers may be
No. 2 seed — or
be out entirely 1B



FOOD

Experiment with
new flavors and
textures for your
holiday sides 10A



FOUNDED 1886
VOLUME 148, No. 354

FACEBOOK.COM/THECHARLOTTEOBSERVER
TWITTER.COM/THEOBSERVER

READ BY 1 MILLION+
IN PRINT AND ONLINE

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2017

\$1.50

Rain
57°/40° See 2A

The Charlotte Observer

CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM

Will new Panthers owner demand a new stadium?

BY STEVE HARRISON, JIM MORRILL
AND ELY PORTILLO

sharrison@charlotteobserver.com

Under owner Jerry Richardson, the Carolina Panthers never said that Bank of America Stadium needed to be replaced.

In public statements, the team said they liked playing in what it

called a “classic bowl” stadium, and former team President Danny Morrison often said the 22-year-old stadium had “good bones.”

But what if a new owner feels differently?

Richardson announced Sunday he would sell the team, just hours after a Sports Illustrated

report outlined allegations of sexual and racial misconduct by Richardson toward former Panthers employees.

Bank of America is now one of the oldest stadiums in the NFL. A new ownership group might want a more lavish stadium with a retractable roof, which would allow the city to

host the NCAA Final Four and the Super Bowl.

“Bank of America Stadium, for the fall, is a fabulous facility for football,” said Marc Ganis, a sports consultant who advises NFL owners on stadium deals. “The concept that Jerry (Richardson) has of a ‘Stadium in a Park’ has worked very well

there.”

But Ganis said the new owners and the city would have to decide whether Charlotte wants a stadium that would allow the city to host large conventions and other championship games. That’s been the strategy of Indianapolis, Atlanta and Dallas, which have \$1 billion stadiums that are indoors or have retractable roofs.

“How much is sports tourism important to the community?” Ganis said. “In Atlanta it’s a convention town, it’s a tourist town. Minnesota (which built a \$1.1 billion domed stadium in 2016) people wouldn’t have

SEE STADIUM, 7A



NATION & WORLD

TAX LEGISLATION HITS A SNAG

The House approved the Republicans’ sweeping tax overhaul, but a last-minute glitch will force a revote. 14A



LOCAL

SANTA CAM DISPENSES JOY

Cam Newton held his annual Santa Cam’s Surprise Sleigh, giving away over \$100,000 in cash and gifts. 6A



BUSINESS

CHARITY SELLS MAIN OFFICE

United Way of Central Carolinas has sold its uptown headquarters and is looking for a new home. 8A



DAVIE HINSHAW dhinshaw@charlotteobserver.com

Attorney General Jeff Sessions in Charlotte on Tuesday announced a new strategy to fight violent crime with the implementation of a new crime task force. Charlotte has had a spike in homicides and gang-related crime recently.

‘Police are not the problem,’ Sessions says in revealing Charlotte anti-crime effort

“WE WILL NOT ALLOW THE PROGRESS MADE BY OUR WOMEN AND MEN IN BLUE OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES TO SIMPLY SLIP THROUGH OUR FINGERS NOW.”

U.S. Attorney General
Jeff Sessions

BY MICHAEL GORDON
mgordon@charlotteobserver.com

Citing two years of surging violence in Charlotte, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions came to North Carolina’s largest city Monday to announce a new partnership between federal, state and local law enforcement groups to better coordinate crime-fighting efforts.

Without announcing many details, Sessions said the new violent crime task forces in Charlotte and Pittsburgh would be modeled after the multistate

effort that led to the arrests earlier this year of 83 violent gang members in the Carolinas and along the East Coast.

Since gang activity already is the priority of the Charlotte FBI’s existing Safe Streets Task Force, the new effort will focus on other types of violent crime – including carjacking, bank robberies, kidnappings and extortion.

Meanwhile, Sessions defended the Trump administration’s crackdown on crime, saying it will make neighborhoods safer both in Charlotte and in cities around the country.

“Some people have to be

prosecuted,” Sessions said. “I wish it wasn’t so. I wish we had a better solution than jail. But we don’t.”

The attorney general’s comments drew a pointed response Tuesday from the head of a group advocating for the reform of the criminal justice system.

“The tough-on-crime, racially tinged policies of the 1980s fueled mass incarceration but did not make us safer,” said Jake Sussman, a former Charlotte attorney and now managing director of Harvard University’s Fair Punishment Project.

Instead of returning to that approach, Charlotte and other communities have been better served by leaders and policies “focused on understanding and addressing the root causes of crime” and which offer such innovations as alternatives to prosecution and improved care for mental health and sub-

SEE SESSIONS, 4A

CUSTOMER SERVICE

To subscribe or report delivery issues,
800-532-5350 or charlotteobserver.com/customer-service

Business
Classified
Comics

8A
6B
8B

Editorial
Horoscope
Lottery

15A
8B
2A

Obituaries
Sports

12A
1B



Pre-Owned
2016 Chevy Malibus
Starting At \$11,988* with 75 in stock.

RANDY MARION

Visit the new
www.randymarionpreowned.com

Randy Marion is the King of Price

*Price does not include tax, tag, title, dealer administration fee, or Enviroguard.
See dealer for complete pricing details.

Mooreville-Huntersville-Statesville-Hickory